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Unified Intelligence

A plan to set up an agency to oversee and coordinate the military intelligence functions of the three armed forces may soon reach President Kennedy's desk. Service chiefs are reportedly fearful of the plan, arguing that it would tend toward centralization of the services and deprive them of traditional functions. The argument for separate collection of intelligence, such as naval intelligence by the Office of Naval Intelligence, military intelligence by G-2 and air intelligence by A-2, should not be raised as a bar to the creation of a central agency. No one can argue seriously that a soldier, sailor or

airman is not the best qualified appraiser of intelligence in the field of his special competence. But the failure to have an over-all coordinator of all intelligence, including that from the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department and even the Federal Bureau of Investigation, exposes the nation to a serious gap in its intelligence estimates.

For the collation of intelligence in all fields, economic, military and political, is an essential function of government at the highest level. No over-all estimate is possible without a study at the top of all factors that go into a composite view. Those who have had experience in the field have been continually amazed by the bearing an apparently isolated observation in the field, something that may have been judged relatively unimportant in the field, can have on a judgment as to enemy capabilities or intentions.

There is evidence, for instance, that our intelligence estimate of the Cuban situation in advance of the rebel invasion was faulty. There is, moreover, a vital need for centralized study of all intelligence in the field of guided missiles and space exploration.

No one questions the need for a central agency for intelligence in time of war. Why should there be any question about the same need in this time of vast world upheaval, just short of military warfare, but a total contest for survival none the less?